Crafts

Werkman's Hot Printing
St. Ives
Brassworkers in Tibet
Post-Modern Furniture Demolished

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Going Public

At a press conference in January Dr. David Dougan, Director of the Crafts Council and Sir Nevil Macready, Chairman, outlined the major policy changes for the Council

The Council will receive £1,830,000 from the Office of Arts and Libraries for the financial year 1985/86. This represents a three per cent increase on funding for the current year and means that the Council's request for a substantial increase has not been met. "It was a considerable disappointment," said Sir Nevil. Since the Council's grant is way below that of other arts organisations a major uplift seemed justifiable. However, the Council has been granted a one-off special sum of £50,000 to be spent on regional development.

At the Council meeting on 24 January it was agreed to give priority to four goals: the expansion of the crafts economy, the improvement of marketing, selling, publicity and advertising, the expansion of crafts education at all levels and the implementation of a programme of national development in the crafts.

Towards achieving these aims the Council will continue to press its case for increased funding from the OAL and will work to increase public awareness of the crafts. A major initiative is a programme of sponsorship and fund-raising. To assist the Directorate with this a new appointment has been made; Barbara Wright as Executive Assistant will be responsible for researching alternative means of finance: "I shall be seeking sponsors not just for exhibitions but for a wide range of projects that might be difficult to fund from our slim government grant. In return we have a great deal to offer potential sponsors in terms of publicity and the popularity of our events."

The Council currently generates twenty per cent of its overall expenditure through earned income in such areas as *Crafts* magazine and the V&A Craft Shop. Targets have been set to increase this.

Existing staff resources have been redeployed to expand marketing, retailing and publicity: "Over the last thirteen years the Council has defined the product — the highest quality craft objects — our aim now is to get the public to buy them," said Dougan, "I want to see a craft object in every home." Grants will be available to help galleries with publicity and staff training.

A new direction in the Education Section is marked by specially commissioned research into craft courses for amateurs. Information is being gathered on the range and quality of day and evening classes and short courses in five strategic areas of England and Wales. Findings will be published in the autumn. [see Education page 53]

The existing Regional Section has been abolished, "it suggested that there is London then some other mysterious place called the regions," said Dougan, "it is replaced by a Grants and Services section which will operate on a national basis." Block grants to the Regional Arts Associations will be increased above the three per cent baseline.

Financial support to individual craftspeople will be maintained, "that is essentially what we're about," but Conservation has been cut altogether and special projects such as the recent *Texstyles* will be reduced.

Wright: looking for sponsors

Have you seen this bowl? Unique piece by Pennell stolen from "British Glass" show

There are plans to generate more touring exhibitions in keeping with new policy to increase public awareness of the crafts and more exhibitions, originated by other bodies, will be brought to the Crafts Council Gallery.

Reprieve For Tapestry

During the recent restructuring of the Royal College of Art, the Tapestry Department (unique as the only specialist tapestry MA course in the country) was threatened with closure. But after examination of its position and validity it was decided at the emergency Senate meeting on 16 January that it should survive.

The Tapestry Department will now move into the School of Painting. This is generally considered to be a positive step since Professor Peter de Francia, Head of Painting, and Mary Farmer, tutor in charge of Tapestry, have long thought this to be the proper place for tapestry within the context of the RCA; the two disciplines having close philosophical affinity.

Crime Wave

Recently there has been a number of thefts of glass from major British galleries, including work by Deborah Fladgate, Pauline Solven and Brian Blanthorn. The case of Ronald Pennell is particularly intriguing: in the last twelve months he has had three pieces stolen from exhibitions. It seems likely that behind the thefts is someone who is highly organised and who knows what he is looking for. Adam Aaronson of Coleridge says, "judging by the quality of the work that's going missing from galleries around the country it looks as if someone is making a collection of very fine contemporary British glass without paying for it."

Since many of the pieces are from series they are difficult to trace, but a bowl by Pennell that was taken from the British Glass touring exhibition is, "a very traceable piece... I have not before or since engraved a piece like it in that way," says Pennell. "It's very distressing to lose works which have been engraved for pleasure, the financial loss is there too but one quickly forgets that." He urges galleries to be particularly vigilant: "I exhibit far more abroad and have never lost a piece in this way at any foreign gallery or museum."